

BOOKS

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NONFICTION

As JFK lore, *Witness* rings false

FALSE WITNESS: The Real Story of Jim Garrison's Investigation and Oliver Stone's Film JFK.

Patricia Lambert. M. Evans. \$24.95. 352 pp.

By JOAN MELLEN

THE BALTIMORE SUN

As New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison's biographer, I confess to an interest in Patricia Lambert's *False Witness*. Jim Garrison, who in 1969 prosecuted Clay Shaw unsuccessfully for conspiracy to murder President Kennedy, was a complex man and no saint.

False Witness, alas, is little more than an unpleasant one-sided diatribe, a belated, curious valentine to the elusive Shaw. Lambert's named sources (most are unidentified) are primarily Shaw's own lawyers. Her tone is venomous, the word "fraud" a verbal tic. "Reportedly" is a constant adverb.

Jim Garrison began his investigation with the Warren Report testimony of his classmate, lawyer Dean Andrews, who told government investigators that one "Clay Bertrand" had urged that he travel to Dallas to defend accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald.

Department of Justice spokesmen soon confirmed that "Clay Bertrand" and Clay Shaw were the same person. The officer booking Shaw reported that Shaw admitted to the alias "Clay Bertrand," an admission not admissible in court, but no less true for that. And a mailman testified under oath at the Shaw trial that he delivered mail to a "Bertrand" at the home of one of Clay Shaw's closest friends.

No matter. Bent on asserting that Clay Bertrand did not exist, a point necessary to exonerate Shaw — the goal of this book — Lambert without foundation suggests that these witnesses were either bribed or mentally deficient. The general reader would not know from Lambert that New Orleans FBI agent Regis Kennedy was looking for Clay Bertrand before Kennedy even interviewed Dean Andrews.

From the town of Clinton, La., a group of citizens testified both



WHAT'S THE FREQUENCY?: Jim Garrison, top, Clay Shaw, left, and Oliver Stone are key figures in Patricia Lambert's *False Witness*.

at the Shaw trial and nearly 10 years later before the House Select Committee on Assassinations (which believed them) that they saw Lee Harvey Oswald, David Ferrie and Clay Shaw together.

The driver of their black Cadillac told a witness he was from the "ITM," the International Trade Mart, of which Shaw was director. Lambert smears two of these witnesses as members of the Ku Klux Klan, although the notion that they would work together with black civil rights workers to frame Clay Shaw is absurd. (For an account of this story see Bill Davy's meticulously researched

new book, *Let Justice Be Done*.)

Near the end Lambert admits that Shaw did indeed lie on the stand. He lied not to the prosecutors, but to his own lawyer, who asked him whether he worked for the Central Intelligence Agency.

Shaw declared emphatically that he did not. Recognizing that researchers now know that Shaw was a member of a CIA operation titled QK/ENCHANT, Lambert preposterously argues, using "one unofficial account" as her source, that QK/ENCHANT was "nothing more than a program for routine debriefing of individuals involved in international trade." Yet, interestingly, Watergate mastermind and CIA spook E. Howard Hunt (Guatemala, the Bay of Pigs) was also approved for QK/ENCHANT, and he was no businessman.

Ever more shrill, Lambert accuses film director Oliver Stone of being no better than "a believer in Hitler."

The author description on the book jacket and press release describes Lambert, cryptically, as a "writer/editor." Yet no book that she ever wrote is mentioned. Not a single magazine or newspaper article is cited. Her book twists the facts, suppresses an enormous amount of material, and offers so distorted a picture as to render it of scant historical merit.